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SUBJECT: 1994 AMIA BOMBING; US-MEXICAN BORDER WALL; ARGENTINE
PRESIDENT KIRCHNER'S FOREIGN POLICY; ARGENTINE 'INSTITUTIONAL
QUALITY;' USG'S REACTION TO ALLEGED PROGRESS ON IRANIAN NUCLEAR
PROGRAM; 10/30/06

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Last weekend's key international stories include the implications of Argentine Prosecutor Nisman's request for an international arrest order against former Iranian government officials for the 1994 AMIA bombing case; the probable impact of upcoming US legislative elections on Latin America; the US-Mexican border wall; Argentine President Kirchner's foreign policy; Professor Mark Jones' opinion of Argentina's 'institutional quality;' and the USG's reaction to alleged progress in Iran's nuclear program.

Conservative "La Prensa" (10/28) reports on last week's press encounter with INL DAS Christy McCampbell.

2. OPINION PIECES

- "Satisfaction and expectation in the US"

Ana Baron, Washington-based correspondent for leading "Clarín," writes (10/29) "After the praise received by Prosecutor Alberto Nisman from the US due to his request that an international arrest order be issued against former Iranian government officials for the 1994 AMIA bombing case, what most worries Washington is whether Judge Rodolfo Canicoba Corral will issue the orders and that Interpol accept them.

"Democratic Representative Tom Lantos said that 'Argentine prosecutors did an excellent job by providing evidence on what the whole world has long thought - that Iranian leaders gave the orders to their Hezbollah terrorist 'puppets' to perform the irrational terrorist attack in Buenos Aires.' Lantos also asked authorities 'to immediately bring the international terrorists who committed the attack to justice.'

"... Dina van Siegel, head of the Institute for Latin America of the US Jewish Committee, pointed out: 'This is not over yet. The Argentine Government will have to issue the international warrants - the sooner, the better.'"

- "An investigation that followed the steps of a failed nuclear deal"

Daniel Santoro, political columnist of leading "Clarín," writes (10/29) "The Menem administration's decision to suspend a nuclear shipment to Iran 'interfered with the Iranian regime's strategy' of 'developing its nuclear program' with alleged military purposes. According to Nisman's report, Tehran then ordered Lebanese pro-Iranian Hezbollah to attack AMIA with its terrorists in order to put pressure on Argentina to deliver a uranium manufacturing plant

and another plant for heavy water production.

"... In December 1991, the first pieces of those factories were to be shipped when then DCM at the US Embassy, James Walsh, called Vice FM Juan Carlos Olima asking to suspend the export... According to 'Clarín's' investigation, on the following day, US President George Bush (Senior) called Menem and Menem then ordered to cancel the shipment.

"According to a 2001 SIDE (Argentine intelligence agency) report, this was 'in the context of a so-called 'policy of agreements,' whose main feature was the use of violence to force countries who suffered terrorist attacks to then agree to a negotiation in line with Iran's interests.'"

- "US legislative elections open doubts in Latin America"

Ana Baron, Washington-based correspondent for leading "Clarín," comments (10/30) "... Undoubtedly, some Latin American left-wing governments have more ideological affinity with Democrats than with Republicans, but this does not mean relations with the Argentina will improve if Democrats win the elections. As a matter of fact, US ties with some countries could even worsen, and Argentina could be a good example of that.

"... Professor Mark Jones, of Rice University of Houston, said: 'If I were the president of Colombia or Peru, I would be very worried.' According to Jones, if it is already quite difficult to renew 'fast track' authority, it will be almost impossible to do it if Democrats win.'"

- "A useless wall of lies"

Daily-of-record "La Nación" front-pages (10/28) an opinion piece by writer Mario Vargas Llosa, who opines "The US Congress has just passed legislation to build a 1,200 km wall on the US-Mexican

border, which will cost 7 billion dollars, to halt illegal immigration.

"For someone like me who is fascinated with the contamination of reality by fiction, the news could not be more bewitching. Why? Because this wall will never be built and if, by miracle, it is built, it will be absolutely useless. Everyone knows this, even legislators who passed the legislation and the US President himself.

"Why all this theatre then? Because there are elections on November 7 in the US and legislators seeking re-election want to show this legislation as evidence that they have started to act energetically against that dangerous demon called illegal immigrants, who deprive US citizens of jobs while harming social security (another weak fiction)...

"... Those seven billion dollars that the wall of lies would cost would render a much more effective service in terms of illegal immigration if they were invested in factories or loans to create jobs on the other side of the border...

"However, this belongs to the domain of strict reality and it is known that human beings - even the gringos, who claim to be so pragmatic - are often more inclined to the magic of fiction rather than crude life."

- "Felipe's luck and Kirchner's turns"

Joaquín Morales Sola, political columnist of daily-of-record "La Nación," writes (10/29) "... Kirchner came back from New York a month ago, with some certainties: not only was the AMIA bombing a criminal attack against Argentine society - its long impunity also shaped its [Argentina's] ties with the world's Jewish community and with the USG.

"Kirchner has always promised Washington that partial disagreement would never cloud an essential point of agreement between Argentina and the US: the Argentine Government would support the US in

reinforcing international security. He has just done it at the UN Security Council, when he voted in favor of the severe warning issued against North Korea for its nuclear tests, and he has just confirmed it by distancing himself from Iran.

"... While the Argentine Government is unlikely to decide to break ties with Iran or denounce it at the UN Security Council, the truth is that Kirchner's support for Prosecutor Nisman's report reveals a substantial change in his foreign policy. He is stepping away from Hugo Chavez, a vociferous ally of Iran and North Korea... Oil prices are slumping and Chavez is starting to become isolated in South America.

"Ten days ago, Kirchner asked Evo Morales in Bolivia 'Why do you need to fight with the US, if they aren't doing anything to you?' Kirchner's last trip to New York served to verify for the Argentine president that a US president can be unpopular, like Bush is nowadays, but that does not change the permanent interests of US policy."

- "Institutional quality"

Horacio Verbitsky, political columnist of left-of-center "Pagina 12," writes (10/29) "The Buenos Aires media is generous with the space it dedicates to lament the lack of institutional quality in Argentina, sometimes with informative objectivity. It is the case of the article published by 'Clarín,' whose excellent Washington-based correspondent interviewed Professor Mark Jones, who had been called by the Bush administration to inform Ambassador Anthony Earl Wayne about Argentina in the framework of a seminar which was also attended by members of the CIA, the US Treasury Department, the Department of Commerce and the Pentagon.

"Jones said that 'the budget really does not exist,' because once the Congress approves it, there is no control of it whatsoever...

"In this way, Jones echoed criticism from the local opposition.

"However, when the story was published by 'Clarín,' the Executive Branch had already submitted a 2006 Budget extension draft bill to Congress. Since growth was higher than forecasted, tax collection was 11 billion pesos higher than expected...

"The Executive Branch submitted the difference and left it up to Congress to decide how to use it... What the opposition will hardly do is to acknowledge the democratic move forward it represents."

- "Bush calls for more efforts to put a brake on the Iranian nuclear plan"

Leonardo Mindez, on special assignment in Washington D.C. for leading "Clarín," writes (10/28) "A new challenge from Iran, a new response from the White House, and tension continues mounting. News arrived from Tehran that Iran has doubled its uranium enrichment capabilities. Shortly after this, George W. Bush responded that if that were the case 'we should redouble efforts to work with the international community and persuade Iranians that they can only expect isolation from the world if they continue with this program.'

"... While the US State Department notified that it was not able to confirm Tehran reports on the progress of their nuclear program, Bush insisted that 'have they redoubled their capabilities or not, the idea of Iran holding nuclear armament is unacceptable for the US.'

"Trapped in the Iraqi 'swamp,' Bush seems to be willing to reach a diplomatic solution at the UN. Just in case, 'Newsweek' magazine has just published an opinion survey indicating that 75 percent of Americans are against invading Iran and 54 percent are even against bombing Iranian nuclear facilities."

13. EDITORIALS

- "Demography and politics in the US"

An editorial in leading "Clarín" reads (10/28) "In the run-up to US legislative elections, the US has just surpassed 300 million inhabitants, and the figure has economic, cultural and political importance.

"The US is the third largest populated country in the world, after China and India, and it is also the developed country having the highest rate of population growth, partly due to immigration. Additionally, the Hispanic or Latin population is now the first minority (14 percent)... This positive trend in immigration contributes to the country's economic dynamism and underscores the multi-racial features of the US society.

"Nonetheless, this trend is at odds with immigrants' difficulties putting their situation in order and acquiring full citizens' rights. 12 million undocumented immigrants plus the construction of a wall on the US-Mexican border speak of this contradiction between immigration and economy."

- "Not like the Berlin Wall"

Conservative "La Prensa" editorializes (10/30) "The US president has just approved legislation to build a long wall on the US-Mexican border to prevent the illegal entry of undocumented Mexican immigrants to his country. The measure not only had broad repercussions in the two countries involved but also in the media almost all over the world due to its symbolic nature.

"The domestic reasons leading the USG to take such a drastic decision are related to the upcoming elections...

"Beyond these considerations, the construction of a wall has a negative impact on the US international image, which its numerous detractors have compared to the Berlin Wall. However, the comparison is inadequate because the Berlin Wall had an exactly opposite objective to the one to be built by the US...

"What one could say about this wall is that it represents the world superpower's inability to continue absorbing thousands of poor who seek in the US system an opportunity to have a better life... Once this wall is built, the American dream will be poorer because it will only apply for those on one side of the border."

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